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Issue Brief

African Americans/ Minority Religion

Description: This issue brief will focus on the African American population and its association with religion. Specifically revealing the historical evolution and current status of religion amongst this community.

Keywords: Religious composition and affiliation, Black Muslim Movement, Christianity, political and social attitudes

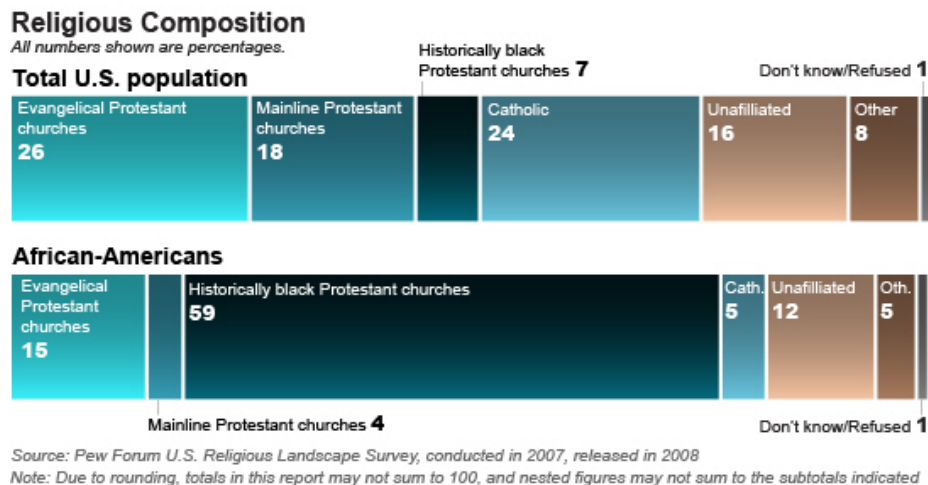
Key points:

- 1.) The Black community is more likely to identify with a religious group than any other race.
- 2.) The history of African Americans, dating back to slavery, is an important component when looking at religious trends.
- 3.) The Black Muslim Movement was a religious movement in the 1960's that asserted the moral and cultural superiority of Africans over Whites.
- 4.) Religious beliefs correlate with specific political affiliations.

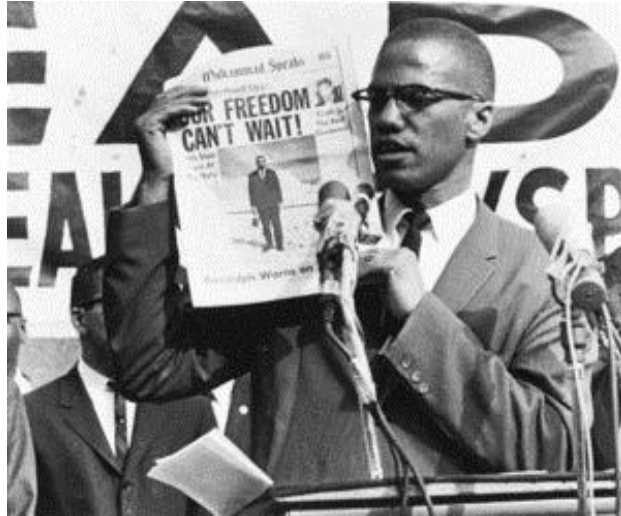
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According to the 2010 Census, any individual indicating their race as Black, African American, Negro, Kenyan, Nigerian, or Haitian is referring to having origins in the Black racial groups of Africa, thus placed into the Census category as "Black or African American." The Black population is the second largest major race group in the United States, behind the non-Hispanic white population. In regards to the role of religion and its correlation to the American population, America is considered a highly religious nation. Focusing on the Black population, data and religious composition reveals that African Americans are markedly more religious on a variety of measures than the U.S population as a whole. The variety measures include level of affiliation with a religion, attendance at religious services, frequency of prayer, and the importance of religion in life. 87% of Blacks identify with a

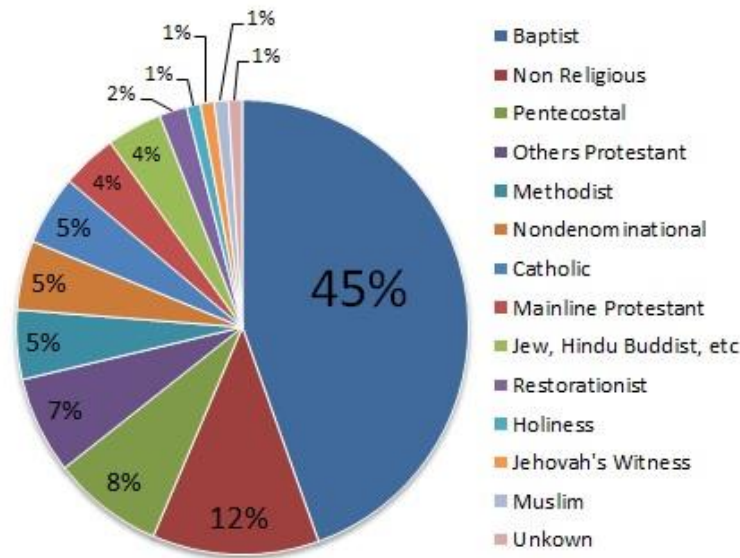
religion and 79% say that religion is of great importance in their life (compared with 56% among all U.S adults.) 53% report attendance to religious service at least once a week, 76% reveal that they prayer at least once a day, and 88% are certain of God’s existence, thus illustrating the religious commitment of the black community.



The history of African Americans is important when looking into the specific religious affiliations of this community. It is estimated that 15-30% of slaves arriving from Africa were Muslim, with the remaining practicing indigenous forms of worship. Subsequent to their importation, all were converted to Christianity. Majority became “Southern Baptists” since most of the white slave owners were Baptist in the South. Today’s percentages reveal that 83% of African Americans are Christian, while only 1% identify as Muslim. Many whom associate with this religion believe their conversion to Islam is recovering their ethnic heritage. In the 1930’s, a small number of African Americans launched the Black Muslim movement, which was an African-American religious movement in the United States. Groups were established based on Islamic and Black supremacist teachings. The largest organization, The Nation of Islam, created by Wallace Fard Muhammad promoted Black supremacy and labeled whites as the “devils.” Elijah Muhammad and Malcolm X were influential leaders whom contributed to the growth of the Nation of Islam.



Data shows a link between religion and political and social attitudes amongst the African American community, one that resembles that seen among the U.S population overall. Higher levels of conservative ideology are reported amongst religiously observant African-Americans. Furthermore, this population is more likely to be opposed to abortion and homosexuality. African Americans closely resemble evangelical Protestants when referring to religions role in politics. Six in ten, amongst both groups, believe that churches should express their social and political views. Additionally, most African-Americans support certain restrictions between politics and religious institution affiliations, including churches refraining from endorsing political candidates.



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